

The Fear Factor

What are **you** afraid of?

If you are like most of the people I encounter in my sales training programs, you likely have some type of fear relating to the sales process. When I pose this question to people in my workshops, the fear of rejection is usually the top concern participants express.

For me, it is cold calling. Prospecting via the telephone has never been a big part of my lead-generation process and it's not something I do with much consistency. As a result, I experience a fair bit of anxiety when I think about cold calling. In fact, on most days, I'd rather take a trip to the dentist than make these types of calls.

What I find intriguing is how debilitating this fear factor can be. Far too many people in sales don't reach their goals or quotas because they allow their personal hesitations to influence their behaviour even when they know it makes good business sense to ignore the fear and push forward. I know from experience that once I pick up the telephone and begin making my calls my anxiety quickly dissipates. Yet, that initial fear and hesitation, often stalls my efforts.

The other interesting insight is that very few people have ever actually encountered a negative experience relating to their fear. For example, when I work with specialty retailers, many people don't suggest accessories or add-on items because they are afraid they will lose the sale. Yet, it is extremely rare that someone in the group has actually lost a sale because they suggested an additional item to a customer.

Another issue that pops up regularly in my programs is asking questions. Most people who sell a product or service know that effective question-asking will help them overcome objections and move the sales process forward. However, many people don't ask good questions because they feel that their prospect or customer will feel like they, the salesperson, is prying.

So, what's the solution?

Unfortunately, there is no quick fix, easy answer to this issue. And that's because everyone is unique and the underlying cause of the fear or hesitation is different with each person. However, here are few suggestions for you.

The most effective solution is push your fear or concern aside and simply do what you need to do. Although this is much easier said than done, it is important to recognize that engaging in the activity that causes you the most concern will help you develop your skill and improve your results. The key is to recognize that it will likely take several attempts before you begin to master your proficiency. However, if you discipline yourself to

stay at it, your results will improve and your fear will gradually disappear.

Enlist the support of a coworker or peer. I'm not suggesting that you get that person to do the task for you! However, by working with a partner, you can role-play and practice the scenario that causes you the most grief. When I first started cold-calling, I rehearsed my opening line and voice mail message with a friend to get his reaction. My goal was to sound genuine and conversational and to keep my message short and to the point. After listening, he gave me a few pointers that improved my message.

Another approach is to think of a positive outcome. I remember my first sales call many years ago. My prospect showed interest in the training program I was offering, and not knowing what else to say, simply asked, "Would you like to book a date for it?" My heart leapt into my throat as I said those words. I felt my heart rate increase. And I was sure my prospect would feel like I was being pushy. Imagine my surprise when she reviewed her calendar and enquired about a specific date. Even though I was nervous and scared about asking for her business, it was a natural extension of our conversation and she was not offended by my question. I know from this experience that asking for the sale often yields results.

The fear factor also affects our customers.

Most buyers experience some form of fear or hesitation when making a final buying decision or considering a new product or vendor. These concerns may prevent them from making a decision and may stall the sales process. That's why it is important to uncover their concerns during the sales conversation. I know some sales people avoid this question because they don't want anything negative to come up during the sale process. However, it is much better finding out what may prevent your customer from moving forward early in the sales process rather than discovering it after you have spend a lot of time with that person.

As Susan Jeffers said, "*Feel the fear and do it anyway.*"

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